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The Divinity School News

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THE AIM OF DIVINITY EDUCATION

[In this issue of the *News* we bring you another statement from Dean Loomer. Under the title "The Aim of Divinity Education" the Dean continues to unfold the meaning and implications of the new framework which he has been setting forth from time to time in former issues of the *News*, in the *Journal of Religion*, and in miscellaneous unpublished papers. Each time the Dean speaks he recapitulates the material and insights set forth in previous statements and then goes on to bring us up to date on the latest aspect of his growth. It is a process of growth, and through his occasional utterances we have an opportunity to grow with him. So it is again in the article that appears on the following pages.

This article was written to be delivered as the sermon for the first Federated worship service of this last Autumn Quarter.—EDITOR.]

IN AN obvious sense the purpose of divinity education is to train or educate men and women for positions of religious leadership. But this tells us nothing unless we know the purposes, functions, and qualifications of religious leadership. Also I am not here discussing the professional skills that are needed by ministers and teachers. The best justification for divinity education—and the best justification for the existence of a seminary in these days—is not professional in nature. Skills are the means and tools of communication. The art of communication is important, and all students need a basic competence. But the things that divide people or unite them are not the arts of communication. The things that matter are the substance of what is communicated.

The aim of divinity education is the disciplined development of heart and mind toward the integrity of faith and intellectual inquiry for the sake of the cultivation of the human spirit in relation and service to God.

I would hold that this conception of religious education is relevant to all degrees: A.M., B.D., and Ph.D. alike. All degree programs involve, or should involve, emotional, intellectual, and religious elements. All degrees should symbolize the achievement of a wider and deeper intellectual vision and a more mature faith. To be sure, before granting a student a degree, we do not require evidence which would measure the sincerity and thoroughness of his commitment. Yet, in the end, degrees are awarded on the basis of maturity. And maturity, as we all know, has its emotional, intellectual, and religious ingredients.

I

The core of our studies has to do with meaning. We are, to be sure, concerned with facts—facts derived from analysis and based upon evidence—as over against opinions and convictions based on authority and supported by comforting feelings. But meanings are also facts. Or, stated differently, there is probably no such thing as an uninterpreted fact or a bare meaningless fact. And an interpretation is a meaning. Thus the determination of a fact involves a decision as to meaning.

Intellectual analysis is the search for relationship or structure. It is an inquiry for connections, for togetherness. Religious faith is the search for or response to communities of value. It is the quest for significance or worth. It is a self-giving to what is held to be a sustaining relation. But these statements are all synonyms for "meaning." Since all our basic activities involve meaning in one form or another, our world is literally a world of "meaning." Because of the connectedness of our activities, because we are one body, one person, the world of meaning for each one is a seamless whole.

This means that intellectual inquiry and religious faith are not only analogous but interdependent disciplines. Therefore, part of the aim of divinity education is the growth, within ourselves and within our community, of the integrity of faith and inquiry. As has too often been the case in the past, we cannot hold our faith in one hand and our intellect in the other and not let our left hand know what our right hand is doing. Our faith must be supported by evidence, and our evidence must be derived from and tested by faithful trust. Our faith must change and develop as our intellectual inquiry proceeds, and our inquiry must be sensitized and quickened by the fire of our faith. Our intellectual understanding must be deep enough to encounter our faith, and our faith must be free enough to include our understanding.

Man cannot serve two masters. If he tries to do so, he will find himself divided against himself. He knows his own enemy. For the same reason man cannot serve two masters of truth. His faith cannot be at war with his reason without a loss of that integrity whereby his life is enriched and purified. His reason cannot be at war with his faith without his becoming more and more subject to the insecurity and anxiety that rob him of his peace. Nor, in the last analysis, can his emotions be at war with his intellect and his faith. We cannot believe one thing intellectually and cling emotionally to its opposite. Part of the function of our common worship is to enable us to relate organically our emotions with what we honestly accept intellectually as true.

Now it is widely held that isolation is a safe way to avoid war. We can avoid war between faith and reason, so the theory goes, by putting them in separate compartments or categories. We can say that each relates to a totally different world. But this strategy is no better religiously than it is politically. This is a defensive position which is only as secure as the barrier or the gulf which divides these worlds. It is at the mercy of the creativeness of the human spirit which discovers new facts, new relationships. Therefore, to endure, it must insensitize itself and tyrannize over itself and others by becoming blind and incoherent.

No, integrity cannot be based upon isolation or compartmentalization. True integrity consists in letting our laughter soften the hopelessness of our tears and in having our tears fill the emptiness of our laughter. The realms of philosophy, science, history, and theology are to be seen as overlapping segments within the circle of one intellectual world, wherein each segment supports and is infused by one faith, one sovereign Lord. The meaning of each aspect of experience is partly determined by the meaning of all the other aspects. Therefore, the evidence derived from one field of knowledge is relevant to our concerns in other areas. This means that the world of evidence, as well as the world of meaning, is a seamless whole. For myself I would add that the criterion of evidence, in all aspects of experience, is also a seamless whole.

The need for integrity in our lives is that demand for coherence. Incoherence indicates a break in the relatedness of meaning. The pitfall that is open to all of us in this respect is the incoherence between general theory and specific practice. We are in favor of justice, for example, but we lack integrity of meaning until we can indicate the economic, political, social, and family practices that this principle demands. This pursuit for factual knowledge in order to ascertain the meaning of our general principles is one of the inescapable conditions of the integrated intellectual and religious venture. It means that we must strive to clarify our vague notions by the process of identification. Many of us secretly fear the discipline of identification because it threatens our illusions and our comforting fuzziness. Yes, the faith that attempts to block the arduous discipline of specification is a faith that is built on the shifting sands of obscurantism. Intellectual inquiry is, therefore, an inescapable part of honest piety.

From what has been said thus far it should be clear that one of the functions of divinity education is progress toward the achievement of self-consciousness. To be aware of the magnitude and direction of our faith, to know the basis of our orientation, to realize the presuppositions and the implications of what we

live by, to analyze honestly and clearly the relations between the various facets of our encounter with life, to be conscious of where we have been and where we are, to perceive where we stand and why—this is the integrity of self-knowledge.

II

But divinity education does not consist only of progress toward the achievement of integrity, important as this aspect is. It also includes the cultivation of man's spirit, his total outreach after what lies just beyond him. It embraces the sensitizing of his perceptual and appreciative awareness whereby he can truly see what his eyes behold. It has to do with the enlargement of his capacity to see and feel, to understand and assimilate. There is the demand for coherence and integrity, on the one hand; and, on the other hand, there is the giving of ourselves to what is beyond our present grasp and to which we are unresponsive. There is analysis, and there is the groping for that which is later to be analyzed. This tension is abiding and necessary.

I am not now talking about the spiritual exercises of sentimental pietists. Rather I am referring to that piety which is a true reverence for the whole range of experience. Education is a confrontation of life through the media of books, professors, fellow-students, and one's self in his several activities. It not only includes the development of critical intellectual habits and the integrated refinement of moral and emotional attitudes; it also calls forth the awakening of the qualities of perceptive sympathy and outreach toward the depths, heights, variety, and tortuous ambiguities that surround us. There is the passion for intellectual clarity and honest probing; there is the hunger for emotional peace and stability; there is also the compulsion for that expansion of the soul's resources which transcends and sometimes shatters the narrowness of some rational clarity and the dulness of some emotional tranquillity.

The true success of religious leadership is difficult to perceive and practically impossible to measure. The carpenter builds a house and can chart its process of completion. The physical scientist can count his experiments and tabulate his results. But the religious worker deals with intangibles, the concrete imponderables, the realm of the spirit. His is a training and an education in the spiritual sensitivities of life. But this education has its tensions.

On the other hand, the religious leader is or should be a perceptual artist in those realities and meanings that make for growth toward human fulfilment. His concern is with the dynamic and creative upsurges of life's restless forces wherever they appear and by whatever names they are called. He is apprecia-

tively aware of that which renews and restores us. He is attentive to the tender and tentative feelers of the uncertain and troubled soul as it responds to a new world, much as a baby takes its first steps. He is alive to the social forces and ideals that liberate and release. He aligns himself with the true prophet who calls for the transformation of our corrupt systems that bind and frustrate us. He knows the persuasive power of noble lives and their biographies. He is keenly and intuitively responsive to the veins of goodness that run through us all. He taps these resources and encourages their full flowing. He is soberly and unsentimentally alert to the redemptive possibilities inherent in the occasion of death. He is deeply conscious of the purifying and constructive power of great art in all its forms. He rejoices in the discoveries that expand our vision of the grandeur, the beauty, and the dignity of our world. And he is profoundly aware of the life-giving and life-enriching strength of deep communal fellowship with its symbols, its traditions, its faith.

On the other hand, the religious leader knows or should know that human fulfilment is never complete. He is aware there is fate as well as freedom, frustration as well as redemption, sin as well as goodness, tragedy as well as victory, despair as well as hope. There is irrationality; there is the coercive power of tyranny; and there is a certain arbitrariness in the very nature of things. These meanings are also outreaches of the human spirit, and the religious leader must be sensitive to their presence, their origins, and their persistence.

Through it all he is conscious of the intertwining of good and evil, of evil disguised as goodness and goodness masquerading as self-interest. He senses that life is ambiguous in its character and that history may prove to be inconclusive. He knows, therefore, that in one sense final justification and validation are matters of faith, of trust, of hope.

These various elements of our experience, the urge to fulfilment and the tendency to despair, are both outreaches of the human spirit. Thus the purpose of achieving an integrity of faith and inquiry is to enable us to understand and pursue that cultivation of the human spirit which is most meaningful and which leads to the realization of religious peace.

III

The achievement of the integrity of faith and inquiry for the sake of the cultivation of the human spirit has its final aim: that of preparing us to become more perceptively aware of the ways and work of God in human life. As I indicated earlier, I believe that it is profoundly important that the religious

leader be able to specify and help to fulfil the personal and social conditions that the reality of God demand of us. It is patently true that most of us are not so able. This is part of our lack of integrity. But it is equally if not more important that we become increasingly sensitive to the work of that reality in our midst upon whom we rely for our very being. We are concerned with that reality which does for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

The perception and knowledge of the ways of God imply that we have a criterion by which to ascertain the work of God and to distinguish this work from all other kinds of happenings. The basic intellectual goal of all our studies —historical, biblical, theological, and practical—is directed toward the achievement of this criterion. For this reason, among others, the biblical record of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ is pre-eminent in its importance. The achievement of our integrity and the nobility of our faith are dependent upon whether we are committed to that which truly is the work of God. The distinction between good and evil and the distinction between what is the work of God and what is not are the two most precious distinctions that man can make—if, in fact, they are not ultimately one distinction.

And yet at precisely this point, in our knowledge of God, our greatest temptation arises. Here we find pride in its most subtle and demonic form. We are all subject to the sin of confusing man and God. We identify our causes with God's purposes, our ideals with his practices, our hope with his resources. But God is sovereign over even our most cherished possessions. He is Lord over even those elements within us whereby we distinguish good from evil. This means that our criterion of the work of God is itself subject to the work of God. This does not mean that we are left in the chaos of skepticism or the irrationalism of nihilism. We must live in terms of the best resources and knowledge we have. But it does mean that the intellectual quest is subject to the dedication of faith, for faith is a self-giving to that power by which we are transformed, even our very minds. The integrity of faith and inquiry is, therefore, sensitive to the integrity of God's love for man.

Christianity is not primarily a set of intellectually satisfying answers. It is first of all a community of faith dedicated to the further creative working of that God revealed in the events of Jesus Christ. The final aim of divinity education is to participate in that kind of community wherein that kind of faith is absorbed, one from the other.

Joseph Bond Chapel
September 28, 1948

Bernard M. Loomer

NOTES FROM THE DEAN'S OFFICE

REGISTRATION

The registration in the Federated Theological Schools for the Autumn Quarter was 214. Of this total, 98 were registered in the Divinity School, 84 in the Chicago Theological Seminary, 17 in the Meadville Theological Seminary, and 15 in the Disciples Divinity House.

CONVOCATION

At the Autumn Convocation, December 17, 1948, the following degrees were conferred by the Divinity School:

Doctor of Philosophy

JERALD CARL BRAUER

Thesis: Francis Rous, Puritan Mystic, 1579–1659: An Introduction to the Study of the Mystical Element in Puritanism

MILES MARK FISHER

Thesis: The Evolution of Slave Songs in the United States

THOUGHTS FROM THE EDITOR

In my foreword to Dean Loomer's article appearing on the preceding pages I made reference to former articles in which he had made statements developing the neo-naturalist position. In case some of you might be interested in the titles and dates of these articles, I have listed them below in chronological order. These are not all the articles the Dean has composed but rather those which constitute the pattern of growth his thought has taken as he has struggled to provide a new, relevant setting for the Christian faith. The articles are as follows:

"Greatness Incarnate," *Divinity School News*, February, 1944.

"Christianity's Prophetic Obligation," *ibid.*, November, 1944.

"God the Void, God the Enemy, God the Friend," *ibid.*, February, 1947.

"Faith and Inquiry," *ibid.*, August, 1947.

"New Framework for an Enduring Faith," *ibid.*, August, 1948.

"The Federated Theological Faculty Today," *Chicago Theological Seminary Register*, January, 1949.

If you would like to have a copy of any of the articles that appeared in the *Divinity School News*, we can send you a limit of one copy of each title. We will mail them to as many as ask until the supply is exhausted.

Many of our friends and colleagues are mentioning to us the fact that they observed the reference in *Time* magazine to the activity in the Federated Theological Schools. Others are remarking to the present writer that they have noted his name and quotes "in print." In case it is necessary to make the point, I wish to say that we at the Divinity School are not happy about the mention we have received in this issue of *Time*. In fact, we are very much chagrined that *Time* would handle a matter of such significant proportions as though they were merely covering the Olympic contests or reporting the most recent upsurge in feeling regarding the "new look" in women's fashions. I do not know how much time the *Time* reporter spent at C.T.S., but I

spent almost an hour with him. In this conversation I very carefully described to him the character of the theological task for our time as we saw it; I pointed out the nature of the need for a new philosophical framework for the Christian faith; I described why the faith could not be relevant for our time unless the new framework had been provided, etc. He sat and listened with all the appearances of comprehending and then went to his hotel to compose the kind of stuff that appeared in print. For your own comfort and information we wish to disavow any responsibility for such a statement. We deeply regret that the public must read such a distorted, even innocuous, description regarding what purports to be our interpretation of what is going on today in the world and in the school.

PERSONALS

H. Parr Armstrong, D.B. *'31*, has become director of Laymen's League in Christian churches for Texas. He was formerly executive secretary of the Oklahoma City Council of Churches.

W. Earl Breon, *'24*, *'26–'27*, has been elected to the position of associate secretary of the World Council of Christian Education with responsibility for public relations and finance.

John C. Granbery, A.M. *'08*, Ph.D. *'09*, is chairman of the Methodist Welfare Association, San Antonio, Texas, as well as being editor and publisher of the *Emancipator*.

A letter from Tomiya Massaki, A.M. *'28*, of Japan tells that the May 1, 1948, issue of the *Divinity School News* was the first he had received since the war. He reports that he retired from the pastorate of the Shimonoseki Baptist Church in 1944 and is now teacher of English and head teacher of the Boys' High School in his native town of Tono, Iwate, Japan.

Henry G. Gehman, *'22*, the editor-in-chief of the Old Testament section and member of the editorial staff of the Westminster Study Edition of the Holy Bible received the degree of Litt.D. *honoris causa* in October, 1947, from Franklin and Marshall College.

In addition to his teaching duties at the University of Toledo, James Harrel Cobb, *'42–'48*, is teaching at the Methodist School of Religion for Greater Toledo. He is also pastor of the Central Park Congregational-Christian Church.

This September H. Lee Jacobs, M.A. *'30*, B.D. *'35*, president of the Iowa Council on Family Relations, celebrated his tenth anniversary as pastor of the First Congregational Church in Fort Dodge, Iowa.

John Ray Ewers, B.D. *'05*, formerly pastor of East End Christian Church in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, is now pastor of the Community Church in Babson Park, Florida.

Erroll Rhodes, Ph.D. *'48*, is now a colleague of William Beardslee on the faculty of Emory University, Georgia.

The vice-president of Florida Southern College in Lakeland, Florida, is now Charles T. Thrift, Jr., Ph.D. *'36*.

Correction. James T. Ross, Ph.D. *'47*, has accepted an appointment to the faculty of Huron College, Huron, South Dakota.

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